

29 May 2009 - Press Release

Climate Change responsible for 300,000 deaths a year



Human Impact Report
(GHF)

- **First ever report exclusively focused on the global human impact of climate change calculates more than 300 million people are seriously affected by climate change at a total economic cost of \$125 billion per year**
- **Report projects that by 2030, worldwide deaths will reach almost 500,000 per year; people affected by climate change annually expected to rise to over 600 million and the total annual economic cost increase to around \$300 billion**
- **To avert worst possible outcomes, climate change adaptation efforts need to be scaled up by a factor of 100 in developing countries, which account for 99% of casualties due to climate change**

London 29 May – Kofi A. Annan, President of the Global Humanitarian Forum, today introduced a major new report into the human impact of climate change. The ‘Human Impact Report: Climate Change – The Anatomy of a Silent Crisis’ is the first ever comprehensive report looking at the human impact of climate change.

The report was issued immediately prior to official preparatory talks in Bonn for a new UN international climate agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. These talks will culminate at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. The report was reviewed by leading international experts, including Rajendra Pachauri of the IPCC, Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia

University, and Barbara Stocking of Oxfam.

The report estimates that climate change today accounts for over 300,000 deaths throughout the world each year, the equivalent of an Indian Ocean Tsunami every single year. By 2030, the annual death toll from climate change will reach half a million people a year.

It also indicates that climate change today seriously impacts on the lives of 325 million people. In twenty years time that number will more than double to an estimated 660 million, making it the biggest emerging humanitarian challenge in the world, impacting on the lives of 10% of the world's population.

Economic losses due to climate change already today amount to over \$125 billion per year. This is more than the individual GDP of 73% of the world's countries, and is greater than the total amount of aid that currently flows from industrialised countries to developing nations each year. By 2030, the economic losses due to climate change will have almost trebled to \$340 billion annually.

The Global Humanitarian Forum commissioned Dalberg Global Development Advisers to develop the report in December 2008 by collating all relevant information and current statistics relating to the human impact of climate change. Within the limitations of existing research, the report presents the most plausible estimate of the impact of climate change on human society today.

Mr Annan said:

"Climate change is a silent human crisis. Yet it is the greatest emerging humanitarian challenge of our time. Already today, it causes suffering to hundreds of millions of people most of whom are not even aware that they are victims of climate change. We need an international agreement to contain climate change and reduce its widespread suffering.

"Despite its dangerous impact, climate change is a neglected area of research since much of the debate has focused on the long term physical effects. The point of this report is to focus on today and on the human face climate change.

"Just six months before the Copenhagen summit, the world finds itself at a crossroads. We can no longer afford to ignore the human impact of climate change. Put simply, the report is a clarion call for negotiators at Copenhagen to come to the most ambitious international agreement ever negotiated, or continue to accept mass starvation, mass sickness and mass migration on an ever growing scale."

According to the report, a majority of the world's population does not have the capacity to cope with the impact of climate change without suffering a potentially irreversible loss of wellbeing and risk of loss of life.

The populations most gravely at risk are over half a billion people in some of the poorest areas that are also highly prone to climate change – in particular, the semi-arid dry land belt countries from the Sahara to the Middle East and Central Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, South and South East Asia, and small island developing states.

Mr Annan was joined at the launch by report review panellist Barbara Stocking, chief executive of Oxfam GB and Global Humanitarian Forum Board Member. She said:

"Climate change is a human crisis which threatens to overwhelm the humanitarian system and turn back the clock on development. It is also a gross injustice - poor people in developing countries bear over 90% of the burden - through death, disease, destitution and financial loss - yet are least responsible for creating the problem. Despite this, funding from rich countries to help the poor and vulnerable adapt to climate change is not even 1 percent of what is needed. This glaring injustice must be addressed at Copenhagen in December"